

## **American Citizens Services**

### **American Citizens Services Newsletter**

#### **U.S. EMBASSY LA PAZ, BOLIVIA DECEMBER 2005**

As a service to U.S. citizens in or traveling to Bolivia, we are distributing a monthly American Citizen Services newsletter for U.S. citizens. Through the monthly American Citizens Services newsletter, the Consular Section provides information pertaining to consular procedures, policies, and other topics of general interest to U.S. citizens in Bolivia who have registered with the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit and provided an email address.

If you believe others would benefit from receiving this newsletter, please forward it to them and encourage them to subscribe. To subscribe to our monthly newsletter and receive other updates, please register online by following this link:

<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/> or

<http://lapaz.usembassy.gov/english/consular/ACS.htm#registration>

If you do not wish to receive this monthly newsletter, or would like to be removed from our email list, please email us at [consularlapaz@state.gov](mailto:consularlapaz@state.gov) or [USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com](mailto:USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com), our new Internet email address exclusively for U.S. citizen services.

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### **Public Announcement – Bolivia, December 13, 2005**

On December 13, 2005, the Department of State issued a public announcement for Bolivia with specific reference to the general elections scheduled in Bolivia on December 18, 2005. We promptly forwarded the text of that public announcement to our wardens for dissemination to all U.S. citizens with whom they have contact. The text is also available on our Web site, [www.bolivia.usembassy.gov](http://www.bolivia.usembassy.gov), and the Department of State Web site, [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

### **Public Announcement – Worldwide Caution, December 12, 2005**

On December 12, 2005, the Department of State issued an updated Worldwide Caution for all U.S. citizens. Upon receipt of this public announcement, we promptly forwarded the text to our wardens for dissemination to all U.S. citizens with whom they have contact. The text is also available on our Web site, [www.bolivia.usembassy.gov](http://www.bolivia.usembassy.gov), and the Department of State Web site, [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

### **Holiday Hours at U.S. Consular Section in La Paz – Close Early Dec. 23**

The Consular Section in La Paz will be open through the holidays, except on local and U.S. holidays. Please note that on Friday, December 23, we will be open for American Citizen Services from 0830 to Noon and 1330 to 1530, closing one hour early. The Consular Section will be closed on January 31, 2006, for an in-house function. Emergency assistance will still be provided; for emergency assistance that day, please contact the Embassy at 216-8000 and ask to be connected to American Citizen Services.

### **Limited Consular Services In Santa Cruz December 23 – January 10**

The consular agent in Santa Cruz will be out of the office from December 23 through January 10. While consular personnel there will be available to provide information and forms, in the absence of the consular agent they cannot provide any for-fee services such as passport applications or other services that require an authorized consular official's signature. Persons seeking those services may travel to the consular agency in Cochabamba or the Embassy in La Paz. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

## **U.S. Voting Information for 2006-2007 Elections**

Even as Bolivia prepares for national elections on December 18, 2005, the U.S. 2006 mid-term elections are fast approaching, with the first primaries set for March. At stake are all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 33 Senate seats, 37 state governorships, and thousands of state and

local initiatives. To assist overseas voters concerning these upcoming elections, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has provided an updated Voting Assistance Guide for 2006-2007. We have distributed copies of that publication to the consular agencies, the American Cooperative School in La Paz, the U.S. Commercial Library at the U.S. Embassy (open to the public 0900 to 1200 and 1500 to 1700, Monday through Friday except local and U.S. holidays), and the wardens outside of La Paz. Please note that the standard voter registration and absentee ballot application are available on line as well as at the American Citizens Unit here in La Paz and our consular agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. All U.S. voting information and forms provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program is also available on the Web at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

## **Contingency Planning for Living in Interesting Times**

The Consular Section in October conducted town hall meetings and outreach visits for U.S. citizens and wardens in Sucre, Tarija, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. During these events, the Consular Chief observed that U.S. citizens should regularly review their own contingency planning and in particular ensure that travel documents for the U.S. citizens and their family members are in order in case they need to depart Bolivia on short notice. Such short notice travel could arise from a family emergency in the U.S. as well as other factors. In case of civil unrest or other events in Bolivia that may lead the U.S. Embassy to go to authorized/voluntary departure status, such as happened in June 2005, U.S. citizens should have contingency plans that include knowing from their own location the safest and quickest exit routes. These routes may lead to a neighboring country rather than a commercial flight back to the U.S., particularly if flights are affected as was the case earlier this year.

The U.S. Embassy recently provided the following information to parents of school-age children. This information may also be useful for private U.S. citizens in Bolivia.

As part of your family's emergency preparations, education concerns, particularly those of high school students, require significant research and planning. Parents should:

- Ensure all necessary school records (transcripts, inoculation records, including evidence of recent TB test, physical exam record, birth certificate) can be readily accessed for hand carry when departing Bolivia;

- Determine the most appropriate safe haven, keeping in mind: cost of available housing and access to appropriate school (most school districts require that a residence-even temporary-be within their school's boundaries);

- Determine most appropriate school, keeping in mind: enrollment requirements, proximity to short-term housing, transferability of AP or IB credits (many schools with IB programs do NOT offer AP credits), graduation requirements, standardized test requirements, special needs;

- Compare your selected school's requirements (both graduation credits and standardized tests) with your child's current record. It is advisable to obtain course summaries of all high school level courses to facilitate your comparison with alternate school's requirements. If additional instruction is warranted, you may want to consider distance learning from an accredited institution that is recommended by your prospective school.

Contact your current school to ask about on-line instruction options for short-term study when access to school is restricted. Parents should also ask about the possibility of transfer of credits from the alternate school to local school record.

## **Responding to Roadblocks**

Roadblocks and public demonstrations, which may commence peacefully but turn violent, are increasingly common in Bolivia particularly before, during and after elections such as those scheduled for December 2005. U.S. citizens in or traveling to Bolivia should monitor local media, e.g. radio, television or newspaper reports, for the latest updates. We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens avoid areas where roadblocks and/or public demonstrations are occurring or reportedly may occur. U.S. citizens who find themselves in a roadblock should not attempt to "run" the roadblock as this may aggravate the situation and lead to physical harm. Taking alternative, safe routes and/or returning to where the travel started may be the safest courses of action under these circumstances. U.S. citizens embarking on road trips should monitor news reports and may contact the American Citizen Services Unit in La Paz or the consular agencies in Cochabamba and/or Santa Cruz for updates. Given that roadblocks may occur without warning, however, and have stranded travelers for several days, travelers may wish to take extra food and water. The U.S. Embassy also advises its employees to maintain at least one week's supply of drinking water and food, such as canned items that will not spoil, in case of roadblocks affecting supplies such as occurred in June 2005. For more information on emergency preparedness, please consult the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) Web site at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). That Web site includes a Spanish language version.

## **New Internet Email Address Exclusively for American Citizen Services**

In order to facilitate communication with U.S. citizens, we recently established an Internet email address exclusively for American Citizen Services. That email is [USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com](mailto:USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com). Please note that "American Citizen Services" does not include visa queries or any matters related to U.S. visas. Visa questions should continue to be sent to [consularlapaz@state.gov](mailto:consularlapaz@state.gov). Emails received at the American Citizen Services Gmail account that do not clearly concern American Citizen Services may be deleted without a response.

## **New Computer System for American Citizen Services in La Paz**

As part of a global upgrade in the computer software and systems the Department of State and U.S. embassies and consular offices worldwide use to assist U.S. citizens, on November 14 the U.S. Embassy Consular Section began using new American Citizen Services software known as "ACS+." Most of the changes will be internal, such as registrations in the Internet Based Registration System (IBRS) automatically transferring into our database instead of us having to transfer the data as we do now. These and other changes will greatly facilitate and improve the services we provide to U.S. citizens. Nevertheless, the implementation of this system may affect the level of service we can provide and we apologize in advance for any inconveniences this change may cause our customers.

## **Hours for American Citizen Services in La Paz Effective October 3, 2005**

Effective October 3, 2005, in order to streamline the services we provide to all consular clients the American Citizen Services Unit will be open in the afternoons only Monday through Thursday, from 1:00PM to 4:30PM, and Fridays from 8:30AM to Noon and 1:30PM to 4:30PM, except U.S.

and local holidays. This change will better accommodate school age children, who need to appear in person to apply for new passports, and other clients. To avoid common impediments to quicker processing (such as incorrectly done photographs and insufficient documents), please first check the requirements of the relevant service at <http://lapaz.usembassy.gov/english/consular/ACS.htm>.

Federal check recipients may wish to come on Friday mornings to collect their checks given that most banks, including the Banco Bisa office at the U.S. Embassy, tend to be open in the mornings and close in the early afternoon.

### **Hours for American Citizen Services at U.S. Consular Agency Santa Cruz Effective October 24**

Effective October 24, the U.S. Consular Agency in Santa Cruz is expanding its public hours. U.S. citizens and others seeking non-visa consular services may come to the U.S. Consular Agency in Santa Cruz Monday from 9:00AM to 12:30PM and 2:00PM to 5:00PM as well as Tuesday through Friday from 9:00AM to 12:30PM.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Cochabamba is currently open to the public Monday through Friday from 9:00AM to Noon. We will advise U.S. citizens and other consular customers through this newsletter of any scheduled changes in those hours.

### **No More Amendments in U.S. Passports – Adding Visa Pages Still Permitted**

As announced by the Department of State on September 19 and also conveyed through the Embassy's warden system, effective September 26, 2005, as an additional security enhancement, all U.S. passport offices will no longer amend valid passports. Instead, customers requesting name changes, extension of validity for limited passports, or correction of a printing error will apply for replacement passports. These applications may be submitted at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz or through the U.S. consular agencies in Santa Cruz and/or Cochabamba.

If the change is *within one year after issuance*, customers will submit a U.S. Passport Re-Application Form (DS 5504), together with the passport that needs the change, the documentation required, and new passport pictures. There will be no charge for routine processing.

If the change is *more than one year after issuance*, customers will need to submit an Application for Passport By Mail (DS-82), together with the passport that needs the change, the documentation required, and new pictures. The cost includes the \$55 application fee and \$12 security surcharge, for a total of \$67 for routine processing. Because minor children are not eligible to use this form, changes in children's passports will need to be submitted using the DS-11 form and paying the related consular fees. Of course, if the requested data change is due to a printing error by Passport Services, there will be no charge.

Those only needing to add visa pages to their passports will submit an Application for Additional Visa Pages (DS-4085). This service is always free of charge when routine. Please note that for any passport services for children under age 14, including adding visa pages, the parental consent requirements apply. For more information on these requirements, please consult the Department of State, Consular Affairs, website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) or the U.S. Embassy website, [www.lapaz.usembassy.gov](http://www.lapaz.usembassy.gov).

All of these forms are available online at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). The Passport Amendment/Validation Form (DS-19), previously used to amend passports, will no longer be valid. For more information on applying for a U.S. passport, forms, and a wealth of other

international travel information, please visit the Department of State, Consular Affairs, website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

### **Changes in Notarial Services Procedures – No More Local Certifications**

In accordance with U.S. law and regulations, the Consular Section may provide certain notarial services in connection with documents to be used in the United States. Documents for use in Bolivia must be processed by Bolivian authorities, even if the documents originate in the U.S. The Consular Section has advised the Bolivian authorities that we will no longer certify documents for use other than in the U.S. Therefore, U.S. citizens who wish to present in Bolivia their U.S. birth, marriage, death or other civil documents should have those translated in the U.S. and authenticated by the nearest Bolivian Consul. Similarly, U.S. citizens wishing to marry in Bolivia and who require "certificates of singleness" may query the relevant Bolivian Civil Registry office to clarify how that requirement may be met. Some civil registry offices accept a sworn statement in front of a Bolivian judge. Please contact the relevant Bolivian Civil Registry Office for further details. For more information on notarial services provided by the Consular Section, please check our Web site at <http://lapaz.usembassy.gov/english/consular/ACS.htm>

### **Emergency Passports**

Emergency Passports are issued in cases of genuine emergencies that require urgent travel. Because of the immediate need for such a passport, the emergency passports issued have a limited validity of, at most, one year. Emergency passports cannot be extended nor can another emergency passport be issued to replace an emergency passport. When the urgent travel is completed, the emergency passport should be replaced immediately by applying within one year from the emergency passport's issuance date for a full validity passport at no additional charge.

Regular passports are normally received within 10 calendar days after the U.S. Embassy receives the application then forwarded via DHL to the nearest Consular Agency (Cochabamba and Santa Cruz) or DHL office for collection. More information may be found at <http://lapaz.usembassy.gov/english/consular/ACS.htm>

### **Current Travel Information**

For the most current travel warnings, public announcements, and other travel information published by the Department of State, such as the Public Announcement for Bolivia issued December 13, please go directly to [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). To receive this information automatically, please register through the Internet-Based Registration System (IBRS) at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. More information on IBRS is provided below.

### **Internet-Based Registration System**

U.S. citizens who travel or reside abroad can now register a record of their trip or residence so that the Department of State and/or nearby Embassy or Consulate can communicate with and assist citizens in case of an emergency. Registration is now online, and can be accessed at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. If you are already registered with us, please re-register online so that we can update our records. Through this secure, online registration system, citizens can register and update their contact information on the Internet at any time. The website also provides citizens with up-to-date travel information customized to their unique itinerary. The data citizens provide is secured behind Department of State firewalls, accessed only by cleared personnel in Embassies, Consulates, and the Department of State, and releasable only with the U.S. citizen's permission under the provisions of the Privacy Act.

### Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

Please note that the Embassy will be closed on the following official holidays in the remainder of 2005 and during 2006.

A - American Holiday, L - Local Holiday

December 26, 2005 (Monday)	Christmas Holiday	A/L
January 2, 2006 (Monday)	New Year's Day	A
January 16, 2006 (Monday)	Martin Luther King	A
February 20 (Monday)	Presidents' Day	A
February 27 – 28 (Monday and Tuesday)	Carnival	L
April 14 (Friday)	Good Friday	L
May 1 (Monday)	Bolivian Labor Day	L
May 29 (Monday)	Memorial Day	A
June 15 (Thursday)	Corpus Christi	L
July 4 (Tuesday)	US Independence	A
July 16 (TBD if observed Friday or Monday)	La Paz Day	L
August 6 (TBD if observed Friday or Monday)	Bolivian Independence	L
September 4 (Monday)	US Labor Day	A
October 9 (Monday)	Columbus Day	L
November 2 (Thursday)	All Saints' Day	L
November 10 (Friday)	Veterans' Day	A
November 23 (Thursday)	Thanksgiving	A
December 25 (Monday)	Christmas	A/L

### Other Internet Addresses of Interest to U.S. Citizens

U.S. Federal Government: <http://www.firstgov.gov>

U.S. Department of State, Consular Affairs: <http://travel.state.gov>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.dhs.gov>

U.S. Federal Aviation Administration: <http://www.faa.gov>

U.S. Internal Revenue Service: <http://www.irs.gov>

Social Security Administration: <http://www.ssa.gov>; SSA Newsletter: [www.ssa.gov/enews/](http://www.ssa.gov/enews/)

Federal Voting Assistance: <http://www.fvap.gov>

U.S. Customs & Border Protection: <http://www.cbp.gov> (for information including importation of household pets, animal and plant health inspection, etc)

U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov> (for information on food products, food safety and inspection service).

Published by the American Citizens Services Unit, U.S. Embassy, La Paz, Bolivia, tel. (591)(2) 216-8297, fax 216-8809, e-mail: [USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com](mailto:USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com) Web site: [www.lapaz.usembassy.gov](http://www.lapaz.usembassy.gov).